

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, MAY 27, 2025

The Lee County Commission convened in regular session at the Courthouse in Opelika, Alabama, Tuesday, May 27, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by an invocation by Judge Colley.

The Chairman declared a quorum and officially opened the meeting with the following members recorded as being present: Judge Jere Colley, Chairman, and Commissioners Doug Cannon, Ross Morris, Jeff Drury, Tony Langley. Commissioner Richard LaGrand participated electronically.

Prior to the public comments, Commissioner Drury read the Commission's policy on decorum.

John Sophocleus addressed the Commission and began by stating he hoped County Attorney Stan Martin was doing well and that all had a good Memorial Day remembrance. He had the honor of attending an event remembering the 50th anniversary of end of the Vietnam War where two former members of his church were among those remembered. He said he had received again a mailing regarding garbage billing so he was once again requesting a copy of customer contract 01-9810 for mail fraud investigation C-2125451. He also stated he enjoyed the work sessions and approved of using the salary of a former employee to help offset the pay for a COO; in addition when garbage service is resolved and no mailings are going out could utilize those savings for a COO salary.

Judge Colley recognized the elected officials in attendance: Revenue Commissioner Oline Price and Sheriff Jay Jones . News media in attendance: Michelle Key with the Opelika Observer.

Richard Curry, Jr., the President and CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of East Alabama, made a presentation to the Commission. He stated that since 1990 the organization has been at the forefront of youth development within the community and works to inspire all young people to reach their full potential. He stated the organization has three bricks and mortar facilities - Auburn, Opelika and Troy. The organization also has the only Mobile Clubhouse in the state which is utilized for communities throughout the county. There is also a recently launched mobile app with a virtual clubhouse for caregivers and families. He invited the Commissioners to the organization's 35th Anniversary Gala to be held at 6 p.m. on Thursday, May 29, at the Gogue Performing Arts Center. The B&G Club served 15,500 young people across Lee County in 2024 and would like to partner to serve even more youth in the county. Commissioner LaGrand thanked Mr. Curry and his staff for all they do for the young people in the county. Judge Colley agreed, saying the work they do changes lives.

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Copies of the items on the Consent Agenda sent to the Commissioners in their packets included: listings of claims to be approved and ratified, procurement card transactions listing, and a copy of the minutes from May 12, 2025. Also included was a listing of travel requests and the announcement of an opening on the East Alabama Health Care Authority Board. Commissioner Cannon made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda which was seconded by Commissioner Morris. Following a roll call vote with all voting yes, the motion carried unanimously.

Under Old Business, Commissioner Cannon introduced the COO Position Job Description and Hiring. He stated that discussion regarding the hiring of a COO for the county had been going on for quite a while. He stated that with the county's growth and current estimated population of 185,000 that it was time to bring in someone who could help make Lee County better. He said he would like to make a motion to approve the COO job position and description at a salary range of \$175,000 to \$225,000 dependent upon the candidate's experience. He asked for the position to be posted immediately for a two-week period. Commissioner LaGrand said he feels this is important for the county given its current rate of growth. Commissioner Drury seconded the motion. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Morris brought back up the travel policy. He stated that although the policy could still be amended, the revised travel policy presented in an improvement from the previously approved policy as there are clearly outlined dollar amounts listed for restrictions on food purchases. He then made a motion to approve the revised travel policy. Commissioner Langley questioned the need for a revised policy versus reverting to the original policy and asked if putting multiple policies in place would create additional work for financial staff. Commissioner Morris stated that had been a concern, but officials had separate policies before and there were no complaints. He stated the revised policy was essentially the original in that the revised policy no longer requires consent agenda approval or a form to complete, but it adds guidelines for spending. He added the policy puts more onus onto the appointing authorities to ensure their employees follow policy and budgetary guidelines; if the travel is outside the budget, then approval would have to be made by the Commission. Following the discussion, Commissioner Cannon seconded the motion to adopt the revised travel policy. The motion passed on a 3-2 vote with Commissioners Cannon, Morris and LaGrand voting in favor and Commissioners Drury and Langley voting against.

Mr. Hardee presented the final plat approval for the property division for the Kenneth Espy Vann Estate located off Lee Roads 644 and 2046 in District 3 which had been tabled from the last meeting. Included in the packets was a location map and a copy of the plat which consists of 6 lots, the smallest of which will be just under .5 acres. Judge Colley questioned if

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there was anyone in attendance on Kenneth Espy Vann Estate .Commissioner Drury stated he met with the citizens and looked at the area in question. He stated as long as the subdivision was meeting all of the required county regulations he said he would recommend approval. Commissioner LaGrand seconded the motion. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Sheriff Jones presented an application for a Lounge Retail Liquor - Class II (Package) license from Hornet Wine and Spirits located in District 4. Sheriff Jones stated there were no objections to the license. Commissioner Langley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cannon, to approve the following Resolution for issuance of the license to Hornet Wine and Spirits. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Lee County Commission hereby approves the application for a Lounge Retail Liquor - Class II (Package) license from Hornet Wine and Spirit located at 7719 AL Highway 51, Opelika, Alabama.

Revenue Commissioner Oline Price presented the annual report on collections and disbursements for the 2024 tax year. The amount represents what has been assessed and collected and remitted less the insolvencies and exemptions/credits every year. The credits were errors in assessments, insolvencies, bankruptcies, litigations, etc. The insolvencies are personal property that still have not been collected or that have liens on them and some of them may be from prior years. She stated collections were \$200,188,604.59 with the state owing the county \$.03. Commissioner Langley made a motion to adopt the following Resolution, seconded by Commissioner Morris. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

BE IT RESOLVED by the Lee County Commission that the reports filed by Oline W. Price, Lee County Revenue Commissioner, of Insolvencies, Errors and Taxes in Litigation for the Tax Year 2024 and Uncollected Insolvencies and Taxes in Litigation for previous years are hereby approved, and that the Chairman is hereby authorized to sign same; and that said Revenue Commissioner be and she is hereby allowed credit for taxes listed in these reports.

County Administrator Holly Leverette presented two letters of support for the Alabama BEAD (Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment) program. She stated two Internet Service Providers, AT&T and Public Service Telephone Company have expressed interest in applying for ADECA' s BEAD program which had extended the application deadline to June 4. The BEAD program is meant for underserved and unserved of Lee County; a map of qualifying locations was included in the packet. Commissioner Drury made a motion to authorize the Chairman to sign the letters of support which was seconded by Commissioner Langley. Commissioner LaGrand stated he was supportive of any effort to expand needed services to the citizens of Lee County. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

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Mr. Hardee presented a final plat for approval for Stone Trace located in District 4. Mr. Hardee said it is creating nine lots with the smallest just over three acres. The development will utilize existing road frontage and has been reviewed and meets the minimum requirements of the Lee County Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. Mr. Hardee said the subdivision is located adjacent to Lee Road 344 and Lee Road 345. Mr. Hardee said adjacent property owner(s) were notified of the development via letters sent out May 16, 2025, so they may attend and voice their support, opposition, or to obtain more information. Judge Colley questioned the audience, with developer Brian Stone, of BC Stone Homes, addressing the Commission. He stated he was there to answer any questions the Commission may have. He said the development was geared toward more custom homes on mid-larger size lots. There being no questions, Commissioner Langley made a motion for approval with Commissioner Cannon seconding. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hardee presented a subdivision variance request for Madison Heights Two in District 3. The variance would be for the second phase of the subdivision, which is located off of Lee Road 2148. The request is for a variance to the road frontage requirement as subdivision regulations require a 125-foot minimum road frontage and 3/4-acre minimum lot size; any less of either would require curb and gutter. Mr. Hardee stated the first phase of the development was completed prior to that requirement being put in place in the subdivision regulations so it does not have a curb and gutter. The variance request is to waive the 125-foot frontage to 120-foot and also to go less than 3/4-acre minimum lot size. Upon review of the application, Mr. Hardee said the recommendation would be to waive the minimum acreage lot size but retain the 125-foot minimum road frontage requirement.

Commissioner Drury stated he had discussed this with Mr. Hardee and would make a motion to approve the variance. The motion was seconded by Commissioner LaGrand. Commissioner Langley asked what the acreage size is in Phase One as this phase would match it. Mr. Hardee stated phase one was approved in 2006 so that phase has smaller lots but the same in road frontage. Mr. Hardee stated the request with stipulations would allow the two phases to look similar without detriment to the county. Commissioner Drury's motion was seconded by Commissioner LaGrand. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Judge Colley stated the need for an executive session which involves an exception to the Open Meetings Act for general reputation and character. The Executive Session was expected to last 20 minutes formal action to be taken afterward. Commissioners requested for County Administrator Holly Leverette to be in attendance. Commissioner Langley made the motion to go into the Executive Session with Commissioner Canon seconding. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously and the Commission went into Executive Session at 5:34 p.m.

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The Commission returned from Executive session at 5:50 p.m. Commissioner Drury made a motion to hire Tutt Barrett as interim County attorney while a search is begun for a new County Attorney. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morris. The motion passed on a 4-0-1 roll call vote with Commissioners Morris, Drury, Langley and LaGrand voting yes and Commissioner Cannon abstaining.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:53 p.m.